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China-U.S.-USSR

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Beijing has portrayed Premier Zhao Ziyang's visit to the United States optimistically as an important symbolic contribution to improving Sino-American relations. Beijing's treatment of the visit nevertheless repeatedly underscored persisting Chinese wariness over Administration attitudes on the Taiwan question, stressing again and again the necessity for consistent U.S. adherence in concrete practice to standing principles and commitments in that regard. Throughout the visit Zhao pointed to the potential for Sino-American economic and technical cooperation, explicitly tying progress to the stability of bilateral relations politically, and he consistently played down any prospects for collaboration in the strategic arena.

Soviet media coverage of Zhao's trip suggests that Moscow found little in the visit to fuel any concerns it might have had about increased Sino-U.S. cooperation directed against Soviet interests.

Beijing Sees Zhao Visit Improving Prospects for Closer Ties

Zhao Ziyang's 7-16 January visit to the United States is the highest ranking visit by a Chinese official since normalization in 1979, and is overshadowed in importance perhaps only by Deng Xiaoping's landmark U.S. tour in January that year. Zhao's visit included a 9-12 January stay in Washington, followed by a tour of San Francisco and New York. In Washington, Zhao was welcomed at a banquet hosted by President Reagan on the 10th, and held talks with the President and Secretary of State Shultz on the same day. On the 11th Zhao met with Secretaries Baldrige and Weinberger and with Presidential Science Adviser Keyworth—all of whom visited Beijing in 1983—and he signed accords on scientific and industrial cooperation on the 11th and 12th. Consistent with normal practice following major visits abroad by high-level PRC leaders, a *Renmin Ribao* editorial summarized the results of the visit on the 18th.

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**Assessment of
Visit's Impact**

Both at the outset and the end of Zhao's visit, Beijing stressed the symbolic importance of the trip for improvement in Sino-American relations in light of bilateral difficulties over the Taiwan question in the past. In a 3 January interview with the American press before departing Beijing, for example, Zhao underscored the importance of his visit for increasing "mutual understanding" and "stabilizing bilateral relations" in view of the repeated setbacks relations had suffered—most recently over the Pell resolution and stipulations concerning China's membership in the Asian Development Bank included in the International Monetary Fund bill.

The *Renmin Ribao* editorial at the end of Zhao's visit similarly stressed the significance of the visit, noting that it was "a major event in the history of Sino-U.S. relations" because it took place "at a critical juncture in Sino-American relations." Given the "wide fluctuations" in the relationship since normalization, the editorial observed, the Zhao visit, together with President Reagan's visit to China this April, are "highly essential" to efforts to "overcoming differences and removing obstacles" in the relationship.

Chinese assessments of the visit in that context have been upbeat and optimistic in tone. Most authoritatively, the 18 January *Renmin Ribao* editorial declared that the visit was "of positive significance and fruitful," and succeeded in "laying a good foundation for furthering relations." The editorial noted in particular that both sides had "clarified" their respective positions and successfully "deepened mutual understanding" during the visit. Speaking in New York on the 15th, Zhao himself even went slightly further, claiming that his talks with the President and Administration officials "helped to narrow down the differences" between the two countries and "enhanced his confidence" over prospects for bilateral relations.

Taiwan Differences While thus underscoring the symbolic value of the visit, Beijing nevertheless repeatedly emphasized with unusual force the importance of Administration attitudes on the Taiwan question for the future of Sino-U.S. ties. At the President's welcoming banquet on the evening of the 10th, for example, Zhao, according to Xinhua, stated explicitly and bluntly that "the Taiwan issue is the major difference" between the two countries and "the principal obstacle to growth" in relations. Though that judgment has become a staple of Chinese comment on Sino-U.S. relations in recent years, no high-level Chinese leader previously visiting Washington has stated it publicly on a similar ceremonial occasion. In formal talks with the President on the same day, according to Xinhua, Zhao was even

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more explicit, stating that resolution of the Taiwan issue remains "the key" to "steady and sustained" development of bilateral ties and pointing to the Taiwan Relations Act as the fundamental obstacle whose "removal" is necessary for lasting cooperation between the two sides. During his Washington visit in October last year, by contrast, Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian had referred to Sino-U.S. differences over Taiwan only obliquely at Secretary Shultz' welcoming banquet—pointing out the need to "remove obstacles yet to be overcome." Similarly, Xinhua only tersely summarized Wu's recitation of Beijing's concerns on Taiwan in his working talks with Secretary Shultz by mentioning that Wu had "drawn attention to the point" in the talks that Administration attitudes on the question remain "the main obstacle" to "smooth and healthy progress" in bilateral ties.

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During the Zhao visit Beijing took positive note of the President's assurances of Administration intentions to uphold the principles incorporated into the various joint communiques on Sino-U.S. relations. The 18 January *Renmin Ribao* editorial noted, for example, that "President Reagan has reaffirmed his government's adherence to the commitments in the past Sino-U.S. communiques, and this is welcomed by us." Speaking as he was about to depart New York on the 16th, according to Xinhua that day, Zhao himself observed in this regard that he found "reason to expect" that both sides will adhere to the principles agreed on in the joint communiques in the future.

While thus projecting optimism about the prospects for bilateral relations as a result of the visit, Beijing at the same time made clear that it does not believe that the visit resolved Sino-American differences, especially over Taiwan. While stressing the positive results of the visit, for example, the 18 January *Renmin Ribao* editorial pointed out that the Taiwan question nevertheless "remains a major obstacle to this day." Noting that there remain "some notable figures in U.S. political circles" whose views on Taiwan "are not in keeping with the times today," the editorial concluded by expressing the "hope" that Washington will "show by its manifest actions that it will really keep its repeated promises," and so allow relations to enter the "stage of stable development." Earlier, a 12 January *Renmin Ribao* wrap-up on Zhao's talks with the President and Secretary Shultz betrayed a note of disappointment in reporting that, while in the talks China had reiterated its call for the United States to "take practical actions to gradually eliminate the obstacle" of Taiwan, "the U.S. side for its part reiterated its original stand on the Taiwan issue."

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In calling for "concrete steps" by the Administration that lend substance to its expressed views and attitudes toward China, Beijing pointed to a number of specific measures during the Zhao visit:

- In his 11 January interview with the American television networks, Zhao applauded "certain measures" that the Administration has taken since the Pell resolution and the IMF bill that have had "a positive effect" on relations; in protesting both Congressional actions late last year Beijing had called on the Administration to take "active" steps to blunt them. In the same interview, according to Xinhua, Zhao pointedly stressed the "great importance" China attaches to "the stance and attitude" of the President in particular and the Administration as a whole; observing that though Congress "is not for the moment inclined to repeal the Taiwan Relations Act," he noted that American administrations "are never powerless in formulating and implementing U.S. foreign policy, if American history is any guide."
- Both Zhao and the *Renmin Ribao* editorial capping his visit called on the Administration specifically to take "practical steps" to implement the "commitments" undertaken in the 17 August 1982 joint communique on arms sales to Taiwan, "beginning this year." Though Beijing in the past has routinely called for the Administration to implement the 1982 communique and formally protested the levels of 1983 U.S. arms sales to Taipei last summer, Beijing has not since then advised specifically that it regards Administration actions this year on that score as a test of its intentions.
- The 18 January *Renmin Ribao* editorial applauded the Administration's intentions to treat China "as a friendly nonallied country," but here too called on Washington to "translate such an intention into concrete policies and measures and abolish the discriminatory limitations" governing economic and technological cooperation with China.

Other Aspects

During his U.S. tour Zhao repeatedly expressed surprise, according to PRC media accounts, at the "strength" of American popular support for smooth PRC-U.S. ties. A 16 January commentary by Xinhua's Washington-based correspondent Peng Di in particular stated that Zhao's "extensive contacts and cordial conversations with the American people" during his tour were "equally as important" as his official contacts and "exceeded people's expectation," and he observed that "their impact can hardly be estimated at present." Earlier, however, in an uncharacteristically blunt commentary in the current affairs journal *Liaowang*, Peng had suggested the importance of such sentiments on the eve of

the visit: if PRC-U.S. relations built up under four administrations "suffer setbacks" under President Reagan, Peng had observed, he "may not be able to win as many votes as he expects" in the presidential election this year.

During his visit, Chinese media similarly publicized Zhao's efforts to impress on American business organizations in Washington, San Francisco, and New York the importance of stable political ties between China and the United States for expansion of economic and commercial relations between the two countries. Xinhua on 11 January, for example, reported Zhao urging those attending a National Council for U.S.-China Trade luncheon that day to "use their influence" to ensure that current Sino-American political differences are resolved and do not disrupt the elaboration of economic ties.

Chinese media similarly depicted Zhao's meeting with representatives of overseas Chinese communities in San Francisco and New York, explaining Beijing's "preference" for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan reunification question and laying out many of the assurances and provisions for Taipei that Chinese spokesmen have done previously. The same accounts also cited Zhao reaffirming Beijing's longstanding position that it cannot make commitments to "peaceful reunification" to "any foreign country."

Strategic Issues Throughout his visit Zhao repeatedly threw cold water on prospects for Sino-American strategic collaboration. In his 11 January interview with American television networks, according to Xinhua, Zhao specifically ruled out the possibility for a "strategic partnership" with the United States in view of Beijing's "critical" views of U.S. actions in the Third World. Though Zhao at other points in his visit suggested that Washington and Beijing do share "identical" or similar interests in some areas—and he reaffirmed a longstanding community of views on Afghanistan and Kampuchea in particular—he nevertheless went on to stress on those same occasions the significance of Sino-U.S. differences in the Third World.

Beijing commentary during the visit instead seemed to stress inversely the strategic importance of stable Sino-American bilateral ties. The 18 January *Renmin Ribao* editorial suggested typically in that regard, that sound Sino-U.S. friendship "goes far beyond ordinary bilateral relations and constitutes an important factor for world peace and stability." "In this sense," the editorial admonished, "both the interests of the Chinese and American peoples and those of world peace require that Sino-U.S. bilateral relations only move forward and never backward." (U/~~FOUO~~)